

2009/2010 WINTER STORM RESPONSE

A recent editorial in the Springfield News-Leader, entitled “Springfield should not cut back on plowing when snow hits” had some misconceptions about how the Street Maintenance Division of Public Works will respond to snow events this winter. The emphasis was on how the City was preparing to make major cuts in snow plowing efforts and how this would make the streets of Springfield unsafe. The opinion took facts from a story they published on Nov. 27, 2009, and made some invalid assumptions that plowing on all Springfield City Streets would be cut back.

As stated in the July 15, 2009 memorandum to Council from the City Manager, due to cuts in budget and personnel, it “will take longer to clear several ‘B’ routes.” It is important to note that those delays will only affect the lower priority snow routes, about 25% of the snow route network.

The most heavily traveled streets **will see no change** in the level of service. Street Maintenance crews will continue to provide round-the-clock snow plowing response. The severity of the storm will dictate the response to the remainder of the routes. By way of example, for minor snowfalls we may moderate our response on secondary routes to daylight hours in an effort to trim our costs. Of course, in the event of a major snow storm, we will put our full effort into the response. By way of comparison, we consider accumulations less than 2” to be minor snowfall, accumulations 2” to 6” to be moderate snowfall, and accumulations over 6” to be major snowfall.

Our normal response to all storms will include a fully staffed 24-7 response to the highest priority streets, which includes the six **A** routes. These six highest priority routes cover almost ½ of the city’s snow plow mileage.

Nearly all snow events will also include a fully staffed round-the-clock response to the six highest priority **B** routes and any lower priority routes that serve R-12 buses (when in session), as they typically involve residential street with grade issues (i.e. hills).

It is the remaining 14 **B** routes that may take a little longer to get plowed. Comprising about 25% of the snow route mileage, these routes present the greatest opportunity to conserve fuel, vehicle wear and tear, overtime, and salt costs without accepting great risk to public safety. These lower priority routes **will also be** plowed and treated.

C routes and residential streets are not routinely plowed or treated except for major events (no change is recommended).

Annual snow removal costs can range from \$100,000 to \$1 million, depending on the severity of the season. Last year’s winter snow removal costs exceeded \$425,000. It is hoped that we can save some of this money for spring street repairs, but not at the expense of having unsafe streets for our citizens this winter.

The Street Maintenance Division of Public Works has responded to the 20% reduction in the Transportation Fund revenues, and the reduction in staffing by using employees from other divisions of Public Works, to fully staff all plows on a 24-7 basis. In response to the skyrocketing increase in salt (see attached graph), Street Maintenance has (like other agencies MoDOT & Greene County) doubled its efforts to make sure our salt spreaders are calibrated to use only the recommended amount of material per lane mile and allowing time between applications to let the salt maximize its effectiveness. Street Maintenance will also continue to respond to emergency medical needs and slick calls as required to meet the health and safety needs of our citizens (no change is recommended).